**Interpreted from Ovid, *Metamorphoses, VI. 7-208.***

There was Arachne,

Who (it was said) allowed people to praise her,

and say she was better at weaving than the goddess Minerva

herself. Arachne was not from a noble family,

but she was a normal girl with amazing skill.

Even the nymphs would leave from their vineyards

on the mountain to come down

and gaze upon Arachne’s amazing skill;

they not only wanted to see her finished product,

but enjoyed watching the process as well.

Only Minerva could have taught someone so well.

But, Arachne denied that, and instead said:

“I am better than Minerva! Let her compete with me,

And if she wins, I will give her whatever she wants!”.

So Minerva came, and disguised herself as an old woman,

and came to Arachne, saying “Let this old lady give you a

word of advice: seek all the fame you want

as the best of mortal weavers, but admit

that the goddess Minerva is better than you,

ask for her forgiveness humbly,

and she will forgive you”.

Arachne becomes angry, and stops working.

She yells at the disguised goddess:

“You old hag! You’ve lived too long.

Tell someone else who cares for your silly advice,

I’ll follow my own advice! Furthermore,

my has the goddess not come to compete with me?”

Then Minerva answered: “She has come”,

and casting off the disguise of an old woman,

shows her true face. Everyone in the room

was terrified, except for Arachne, who was fearless.

The two started the competition immediately; they sit

at their looms and spindles, and begin to work right away.

Each one weaves a giant picture that tells an old and famous tale.

Minerva weaves the Areopagus, the place

where Athens earned its name. The twelve gods are seated

all around the Areopagus, with Jove the almighty in the middle.

Arachne shows the story of Europa,

and how she was tricked by Jove into sleeping with him,

Jove who turned into a bull and brought Europa far out to sea.

She showed many stories, all woven into one great story,

it was a sight to see!

Thus Arachne created the better masterpiece,

and it was clear to all who the victor was.

but Minerva was jealous and bitterly upset.

The goddess ripped apart Arachne’s work,

And took Arachne’s loom and beat her

with it, over and over. Then, she fixed a noose

around the poor girl’s throat, and nearly killed her,

but then stopped. “Though you will hang from this noose,

you will live, wicked child. You will be punished through eternity!”

Suddenly, Arachne lost her hair, then her nose and ears,

her head grew smaller and her body too. Her fingers became legs

that hung from her sides, and she shrank into a tiny size.

Her belly grew huge, and now she constantly spins webs,

and lives out her life as a spider.

**Guiding Questions**

1. **What was Arachne so good at? What was her amazing skill?**

**2. Did she think she was better, or worse, than the goddess Minerva?**

**3. What did Minerva disguise herself as?**

**4. What advice did Minerva give Arachne?**

**5. What was the competition? Who won the competition?**

**Questions to discuss in class (*write these on a separate piece of paper*):**

1. **Why do you think people told this story? What was its purpose?**

**2. Is there a moral to this story?**

**Minerva and Arachne vocabulary and reading guide**

**Loom and spindle**: devices used for weaving

**Nymph:** A type of magical spirit that Greeks and Romans believed in. They were thought to roam in meadows and mountains.

**Minerva:** she is known as the best weaver in Greek and Roman religion.

**Areopagus:** The famous hill of Athens where Athena and Poseidon competed to become the patron deity of the city. Athena won and so the city was named Athens.

**Noose:** a rope that is tied in a certain way so to hang people to death. It was used as part of the death penalty in many parts of the world until recently.